

February 23, 2022

Testimony Regarding HB 5037 - Dental Reimbursement Rates
Melissa Bednaz – Tunxis Community College Dental Hygiene Program

Senators Kushner, Cicarella, Osten, Hartley, and Miner, Representatives Abercrombie, Betts, Walker, Dathan, Nolan, and France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Melissa Bednaz and I lived in West Suffield, CT until recent and moved just over the border to East Longmeadow, MA.

I am testifying in my role as a dental hygiene student graduating Tunxis Community College on May 26, 2022.

The proposed increased reimbursement rates for adults seeking dental treatment on HUSKY are greatly appreciated, especially the proposed endodontic rate matching the children's rate. However, we are concerned the 25% increase is too small to increase provider participation. **In order to increase provider participation in Medicaid, adult dental reimbursement rates need to be increased to parity with the child rates.**

I am a current dental hygiene student in my final semester and graduating in May 2022. Our class has been fortunate enough during the Covid-19 pandemic to experience clinical rotations in the state of Connecticut. These rotations include Hartford Public Schools, Skilled Nursing Home Facilities, and Community Health Centers and have greatly assisted in our experiences. I've taken a personal interest in this matter due to my parents becoming immigrants from Poland who were on state insurance for many years. Remembering back when I was a child, my parents needed dental care for many reasons including endodontic work. Unfortunately, the dentists that were highly recommended couldn't accept my family's insurance. The adult dental Medicaid rates are so low, dentists receive 37 cents on the dollar compared to average insurance. Many dentists who desperately wanted to help my parents were providing discounts where they could, and in some cases could create payment plans for their dental work. It is known that the average wait time for a root canal is about 4 months, and that is too long to live with pain and a successful prognosis. Some of the necessary dental work my parents needed was too expensive resulting in having to extract certain teeth. For many years I always wondered why my parents couldn't receive the same dental treatment as I did. There are only 300 or so practices that will see adults, compared to about 700 that will see children. There are more adults than children on HUSKY. It is known that a commonality among dentists is declining insurance companies. But why? According to Dental Economics (2019), there was a survey performed by Bankers Healthcare Group stating that out of over 400 licensed dentists, a massive result of 72% stated that declining reimbursement rates is their number one concern in consideration of companies. That's a very large percentage of dentists

with a similar concern, and something should be considered to gain appeal on this matter to bring equal treatment opportunity to all populations.

I urge you to increase the adult Medicaid reimbursement rates to bring them to parity with the child Medicaid rates. This will allow family dental practices to accept Medicaid patients of all ages, expanding the network and improving access to care.

We look forward to continuing this conversation about how we can best provide comprehensive dental care to Connecticut's low-income residents. Thank you for your time and for supporting access to care in Connecticut.

Melissa Bednaz